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DEPARTMENT FOR S/USSES

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [SU](#) [UK](#)
SUBJECT: SUDAN/DARFUR: SLA/AW REPS DISCUSS PRIORITIES AND
DOHA AS PEACE TALKS VENUE

Classified By: Political Counselor Richard Mills, reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) Summary. London-based representatives of Abdul Wahid al Nour's Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/AW) Yahia Ahmed Elbashir and A. A. Ezaldeen said improving the humanitarian situation caused by the expulsion of NGOs in Darfur and improving security on the ground are their top two priorities in an April 21 meeting with Embassies London and Khartoum poloffs. Doha is not an appropriate venue for peace talks, they argued, because it was selected by the National Congress Party (NCP), the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), and others who promote Arab and Islamic interests. On the contents of a peace agreement, Elbashir and Ezaldeen said SLA/AW wanted full-humanitarian access, full security control without Government of Sudan (GoS) threats, and establishment of governance structures capable of responding to Darfuri needs. They agreed to further discuss with Abdul Wahid the need for SLA/AW engagement with UN/AU Chief Mediator Bassole and at discussions in Doha, indicating that some Fur leaders are interested in what steps can be taken immediately to improve the situation on the ground. End summary.

SLA/AW Priorities: Humanitarian Situation and Security

¶2. (C) Yahia Ahmed Elbashir and A. A. Ezaldeen, London-based spokesmen for Abdul Wahid al Nour's Sudan Liberation Army/Movement told Embassies London and Khartoum poloffs on April 21 that SLA/AW's top priorities are improving the humanitarian situation and security on the ground in Darfur in the wake of the March 4 expulsion of NGOs working in Darfur. Elbashir noted that over 3,000 Dafurians had lost their jobs with the NGOs' departure and that the provision of IDPs' humanitarian needs was becoming increasingly critical. A second priority is improving the security situation on the ground as violent attacks continue to occur and as, they claimed, the Government of Sudan continues to arm janjaweed groups.

"Much Doubt" About Doha as a Venue for Peace Talks

¶3. (C) Couching SLA/AW's objectives for a democratic and secular state as fundamentally different from the "Islamic" NCP and JEM, Elbashir said SLA/AW has "much doubt" about Doha as an appropriate venue for peace talks, especially as Qatar is not a democratic or regional player. He noted the Qatari Amir's public support for the NCP and Sudanese President Omar al Bashir and said SLA/AW was never consulted on the venue for the talks. One side - the Islamists - he said, cannot unilaterally determine the location of the talks. He said Abdul Wahid would support Egypt over Qatar as a venue for talks, though he did not address Abdul Wahid's overall reticence to engage. He also questioned why Bassole, as an independent mediator, would support Doha as the venue without consulting all major groups concerned. Elbashir suggested there should be two venues: allowing JEM to continue its discussion in Doha and a second venue for other groups to

talk in the region. The two groups could then merge once consolidated positions had been reached. They agreed to engage Abdul Wahid further on how SLA/AW might be able to achieve its objectives in Doha.

The Contents of an Agreement

14. (C) Arguing that the venue was important because it affected the contents of the agreement and the parties' ability to negotiate on an equal footing, Elbashir and Ezaldeen listed SLA/AW's core asks for an agreement: full-humanitarian access, full security control without GoS threats, and establishment of governance structures capable of responding to Darfuri needs. Elbashir said the NCP uses the process of peace discussions as a delaying tactic and creates humanitarian crises, as it did with the expulsion of the NGOs, to distract the international community's attention from long-term solutions. He explained that there is currently a short-term struggle for humanitarian access and a long-term struggle to resolve the political crisis, and SLA/AW had to approach the situation with both of these issues in mind. Because SLA/AW views itself as a party to the 2004 Ndjamena cease-fire, they reiterated that any conflict suspension agreement would depend on the GoS and its allies in Darfur, actors they view as destabilizing the situation and bringing in new settlers from West Africa to Darfur. Elbashir commented that the GoS is always ready to sign a peace agreement, as it did with the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) in 2006, but is never interested in implementing agreements, as evidenced by the South's continual struggle for implementation of the Comprehensive

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Peace Agreement (CPA).

Comment

15. (C) Elbashir and Ezaldeen were open to the idea that SLA/AW should consider how it could achieve its objectives in Doha and agreed to engage Abdul Wahid further. While that is a long way from Abdul Wahid's agreement to participation in peace talks in Doha, it does indicate that there are Fur activists who are considering what steps can be taken immediately to improve the situation on the ground in Darfur. The two leaders will be traveling to Geneva next week to meet with Abdul Wahid and senior SLA/AW commanders, and their amenability to talks may assist in persuading the notoriously stubborn Abdul Wahid to go to Doha.

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